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Review

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*The Clans, Septs, and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands.* By FRANK ADAM, F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A. Scot. W. and A. K. Johnston. 505 pp. dy. 8vo. 15s. net.

The aim of this book 'is the presenting in condensed form an epitome of information relating to Tartans, Highland Clan Matters, Scottish Regiments, and, as far as possible, Clan Septs.' Of the fifteen chapters into which it is divided, four deal with history from 400 B.C. down to 1902 A.D., while chapters are also devoted to Highland music, the Celtic languages in the British Isles, and Armorial bearings. There are thirty-five appendices, and plates of one hundred and fourteen tartans. Mr. Adam's difficult task was rendered still more difficult by residence in Selangor, and though the work contains much matter that will be read with interest, and which will be a useful starting-point for critical inquiry, it would be unsafe to found on it. The historical side, for instance, repeats many of the errors in Skene's *Scottish Highlanders*, which Skene himself subsequently corrected. The origin of the clans is often unsatisfactorily dealt with, *e.g.*, the Mathesons are made Norse, and the Grants Celtic. Mr. Adam has also been following unsafe guides in philology. Altogether we are rather disappointed that the author has not been able to avail himself more of reliable modern research. In Appendix twenty-six giving the Celtic census of 1901, Glasgow, which Mr. Adam regards as *the* Highland capital, is returned at seventy-nine persons speaking Gaelic only, and 16,930 speaking Gaelic and English, or not quite two and a half per cent. of the total population of 690,044. Yet Mr. Adam assures us on p. 338 that Glasgow contains over 250,000 Highlanders, or over thirty-six per cent. of the total population. But perhaps Mr. Adam's notion of what constitutes a Highlander differs from Helen Macgregor's.

*Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys.* Translated for the first time from Wanchier de Denain's section of the *Conte del Graal*. By JESSIE L. WESTON. David Nutt. 2s. net.

This is the seventh volume of the series of Arthurian Romances unrepresented in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. It describes an expedition undertaken by King Arthur and several of his knights against Castle Orguellous to rescue a brother of the Round Table; also certain adventures (one of them the outcome of the love-story of Sir Gawain and the Lady of Lys) which befell them on the way thither. One may apply to the whole Miss Weston's own words regarding the second adventure: 'an admirable story, picturesque, vivid, and full of human interest.' Doubtless a good deal of the credit for this is due to the translator, whose diction has a delightful old-world atmosphere about it, without, however, the least trace of affectation. Perhaps, too, the book gains something from the fact that it has been written for the general public rather than for a few Arthurian specialists, and that in the most interesting part an obviously later version of the tale has been preferred to an older but less pleasant one. The result is a piece of writing which makes one wish that the different versions of our own Gaelic tales,

now that they have served the scientist's purpose, were pieced together by some one with the requisite literary touch, so as to form romances worthy of the wealth of material available. If this should ever be done and an English translation called for, Miss Weston's work might well be studied as a model.

Perhaps the most striking feature in this series of Arthurian texts is the fact that neither Arthur nor Lancelot is the outstanding hero; their place is taken by the Sir Gawain who cuts such a sorry figure in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Arthur is still the king, but he is not always kingly; Lancelot, when he appears at all, is more or less in the background. Miss Weston holds that such, and not 'Malory's libel,' is the true Arthurian legend, and she quotes with approval Professor Maynadier's remark that, 'it is in truth Gawain and not Arthur who was the typical English hero.' All of which may be true, but surely the attempt to 'dethrone' Arthur comes too late. It may be quite possible to beat his great partisan, Malory, off the field (Miss Weston herself seems quite equal to that feat); but there still remains Tennyson. In popular estimation at any rate, 'not Lancelot nor another,' not even Gawain, is ever likely to take Arthur's place as the typical English (should we not say Celtic?) hero. And apart altogether from the popular point of view, it is very doubtful if Miss Weston's 'true Arthurian legend,' even supposing we could distinguish it with certainty, would really decide the matter. We take it for granted that Arthur and at any rate some of his knights existed in folk-tales long before the time of Bleheris and other romancers; and folk-tales, from their very nature, are more or less inconsistent in the characters of their heroes. The romancers in arranging and harmonising the various floating traditions of their day, must have had great difficulty in deciding whether certain characters should be written down heroes or poltroons, and probably the ultimate decision was the outcome of personal bias rather than of a nice discrimination. And once the choice was made, it was easy to give an unfavourable tale the desired twist, or manufacture another in its place—or, as Miss Weston herself has done in the romance under review, sacrifice the older for the more pleasant version! And as the early romancers dealt with the folk-tales, so Malory probably dealt with the early romancers; in neither case can we be certain that we have 'true Arthurian legend.' In our own tales of the *Feinn*, for instance, Fionn, Goll, and Diarmaid are not consistently heroic; each of them could easily be *twisted* into something more or something less than a hero; and even at their best, all three are sometimes outstripped in heroship by some non-Fingalian. Such is the way of mythology; and to take sides with Goll against Fionn, or with Diarmaid against them both, would surely argue a superhuman earnestness—and a curious lack of humour! And yet who knows but some future folk-lorist may discover (by the exercise of a little ingenuity) that even *Conan Maol* was a much-abused person, and that he, rather than Fionn, should be regarded as the typical Gaelic hero!

Though we cannot, like Miss Weston, wax indignant over 'Malory's

libel,' yet we share her hope that 'it may be possible once more to rejoice the hearts of our English folk with a restored and modern rendering of the *Geste of Syr Gawayne*, even as Bleheris told it wellnigh a thousand years ago.' It would do 'our English folk' a great deal of good—provided they were able to appreciate it!

KENNETH MACLEOD.

*Caniadau Cymru.* Selected and Edited by Professor W. LEWIS JONES, M.A.  
Bangor: Jarvis and Foster.

All lovers of poetry must welcome with pleasure Professor Lewis Jones's new edition of *Caniadau Cymru*—the songs of Wales. That the book supplied a long-felt want in Wales is amply proved by the fact that a second edition was required so soon, and it says much for the love of the Cymric people for beautiful poetry, a commodity supposed to be a drug in the market over Offa's Dyke. In compiling this collection Mr. Lewis Jones has done a real service to Welsh literature. The anthology gives us the very best examples of the lyric poetry of Wales in chronological order from 1450 to 1887, and the editor with unerring good taste, and sound judgment, has not admitted a line throughout the book which could be in any sense termed offensive. In this Mr. Lewis Jones has set up a standard which many of us would do well to follow, and perhaps that may be one among many reasons why his anthology is so much appreciated. What Professor Palgrave did long ago for the English poets when he compiled his *Golden Treasury*, Professor Lewis Jones has done for the poets of his own land, with the result that we have in this book the freshness of the mountain air, the beauty of the heather bloom in all its dainty colouring, and the glad carolling of the lark intermingled with the songs of the thrush and the blackbird. For right well did the old Cymric poets love mother earth in all her changeable moods. In reading the book it is impossible not to be sorry that the charm of such poetry seems to fight so shy of the translator. Here we have a collection of Welsh poetry that will compare favourably with the lyric poetry of all other nations, yet so dependent upon the native tongue to set forth its beauty; having a sort of native aroma which is lost in a foreign setting. May be the outpouring of the soul in song because the singer could not help singing whether it was in praise of the loved land with its old time glory, for love of a maid, or perchance the beauty of the modest wildflower, is not easy of translation, for they lack the charm of association when not in their native air. But to the Welsh student, and to those who have realised that we are not without a literature, because it is not written in the English language, the book *Caniadau Cymru* will be a never-failing delight. Nor should any reader omit reading the preface, which in itself is a valuable literary contribution to the discussion of the characteristics of lyric poetry.

The publishers have also done their share; the artistic and tasteful form in which the book has been issued will commend itself to those of us who for years have been so ashamed of our paper bound, badly printed, and altogether hideous volumes, the very sight of which begged the question